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Depression: Define it. Defeat it.

FACT SHEET

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FACTS FOR BUSINESS

Over the course of a lifetime, fully one-eighth of all men and one-fourth of all women will suffer from an episode of clinical depression—many of them during their most productive work years.

Depression is often misunderstood. It is not a passing mood. It is not a personal weakness. Depression is a major health disorder.

Depression can be treated with medications, with short-term talk therapies, or with a combination of both. In between 80 and 90 percent of cases, treatment can be successful in enabling people with depression to return to satisfactory, functioning lives. Nearly everyone can get some relief.

It has been calculated that the economy loses $10 billion annually because Americans miss an estimated 156 million days from work due to clinical depression. An added $4.2 billion in potential earning power is lost each year because 15 percent of people with severe depression eventually commit suicide.

No one has estimated the productive time workers lose while on the job, but undiagnosed depression saps energy and alters work habits. Depression often causes problems with concentration, memory, and decision-making. Costs escalate if a worker's untreated depression contributes to alcoholism or drug abuse.

Additional business costs accrue when any worker has a family member suffering from depression. The depression of a spouse or child can disrupt a worker's schedule, lead to days absent from work, affect concentration, and decrease productivity.

As employer or as manager, you can alter the impact of depression in your work place.

Let employees know that you understand the seriousness of depression and that you attach no stigma to it. Make sure your employee assistance program staff has full knowledge about depression. Make sure your health benefits plan covers the cost of treatment.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES · Public Health Service
Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration · National Institute of Mental Health
D/ART PROGRAM DEPRESSION/Awareness, Recognition, and Treatment Program

HE 20.8102:

Learn to recognize symptoms of depression:

- Expressions of helplessness and hopelessness.
- Sadness, irritability, fear.
- Loss of self-esteem.
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering.
- Physical symptoms including headache, backache, or other chronic pain.
- Loss of appetite or overeating.
- Sleeplessness or the desire to oversleep.
- Decreased energy, fatigue.
- Loss of interest in usual activities and responsibilities.
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts.

Encourage employees who show several symptoms of depression for 2 or more weeks to see a physician or mental health professional for accurate diagnosis and treatment.

Work with national or community organizations to obtain, display, and distribute information about depression at your work place and to provide employees with referral sources for treatment. (There may be a D/ART coalition in your community.)

For additional information about depression and its impact in your work place, write

D/ART Program
National Institute of Mental Health
5600 Fishers Lane, Room 14C-02
Rockville, MD 20857

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